

## **VIRGINIA TIERI**

### ***Attrazioni ipnotiche per l'instabilità = Hypnotic attractions for instability.***

For the second time, MACRO Hall again interacts with a great artist and his work: Pedro Cabrita Reis.

Twelve steel girders, sixteen neon lights, four panes of glass, paint... These are the elements that characterise the sculpture, which has now taken centre stage in the museum

In Pedro Cabrita Reis's sculpture, the interaction with space is not dependent on its architectural components, and the surrounding context is examined only in terms of the spatial dimensions: height, width, depth. In the work, architecture is the temporary habitat of the sculpture that temporarily belongs to it, but it might just as well belong to other space.

It is not the artist who adapts to the context, but it is the context that changes its own distinctive nature, as we can see in the case of MACRO Hall which is transformed from a foyer connecting the various departments into a perfect stage setting, behind which and by means of which we can easily – but erroneously – be compared to an architectural construction, though the artist sees architecture as just one of many sources of inspiration: it is "a mental exercise".

In *Every Moment, One Moment After the Other* we can witness, for example, an overturning of the principles of statics simply out of a desire for disorder and chaos. Most of the materials come from the building industry – wood, bricks, plaster, glass, electric cables, piping, and copper – but, unlike architects, the artist confers upon these materials a sense of melancholy throughout the entire construction process.

This means that Pedro Cabrita Reis's model is not so much architecture as ruins and their transformation, and this is why we see fragments of walls, doors and windows, ripped-out neon lights and hanging wires, all torn away from their context and inserted in another one, forcing us to reconsider their primary function.

## **Virginia Tieri**

MACRO Hall is the hub around which all the exhibition spaces of the museum revolve.

Glass, steel, stone, small bricks and plaster create this place of encounter and interconnection: *Every Moment, One Moment after the other* is an important site-specific work that has created one space by modifying another.

When you were working on this project, did you use the theme of the place and the context as the main element of your artistic creation?

**Pedro Cabrita Reis**

No. The idea was already a concept being developed in my mind. But, I certainly took into consideration the "nature" and the "presence" of the particular space of MACRO Hall when installing the work *in situ*.

**Virginia Tieri**

Is the reason the four glazed surfaces reveal different forms of treatment somehow related to the relationship your sculpture wishes (or does not wish) to establish with its surroundings?

**Pedro Cabrita Reis**

I would rather prefer to point out that most of my works involve many different art practices at the same time. In the particular case of these four glazed surfaces, I've always thought about them as paintings and like so they were "handled" during the whole constructive process.

**Virginia Tieri**

The use of certain construction materials, the shape of the structure and the complex of components that make up your sculpture recall the skeleton of a building still under construction, in which one has the sensation of something unfinished. At what point do your works become complete?

**Pedro Cabrita Reis**

That's a question to which I'm afraid I cannot provide an assertive answer. I would say that sometimes my works get complete only in the works that will follow. It just happens that while you're involved with a certain work you find the answers that remained hidden and that you were trying to find in the process of a prior work.

**Virginia Tieri**

MACRO is currently at the centre of an ambitious enlargement project being carried out by french architect Odille Decq. The building site can be seen from the Hall

through a window behind your work, and its proximity inevitably creates a series of cross-references. While girders and pillars together act as supports in the building site, what value do these elements have in your work?

**Pedro Cabrita Reis**

I've always emphasized in my work and in my thought or words about it the importance of the so-called real or everyday common life. And this certainly includes the option for using materials or objects deprived of anything else but their plain functionality on the territory of construction. Through their alleged simplicity or banality these materials, when used in an artwork, reopen the discussion on poetics and meaning. By that, redefining the politics of our position in relation to art as an ultimate form of intelligence.

**Virginia Tieri**

In formal terms, your sculpture brings to mind the concept of housing, where the inside is made different from the outside by the value of intimacy and protection, which is given by the walls of a home.

Does this perception of inside-outside exist? Can one talk of a "habitable" sculpture?

**Pedro Cabrita Reis**

We can always talk about an economy of space as a form of defining territories of perception. I'm strongly convinced the every artwork is "habitable" in the sense it provides the viewer with a "place" from where this viewer reorganises an "intimate" geography or, if you wish, creates a place of self-awareness.

**Virginia Tieri**

The link between the various elements (girders, pilasters, neon lights, fittings, electric cables) which form you sculpture is never concealed and indeed the entire building process is openly declared.

Why should nothing intrude to confuse the description of how you work is made?

**Pedro Cabrita Reis**

Perhaps because I have troubles with "tricks" and "special effects", which seem to be a plague in most of the art that surrounds us these days. What it is is what it is. Then components and process by being so unmistakably shown having no apparent veil to hide behind will in fact turn out to be a dense and complex mental labyrinth

that whispers to us, behind the silent clarity, which seems to be generated from within the work.

**Virginia Tieri**

Brutalism is an architectural current dominated by the expressive power of the building. The volumes are accentuated and robust, and the shape and materials come together in a powerful architectural language. Might this be the architectural current you take inspiration from?

**Pedro Cabrita Reis**

As often mentioned in my texts or conversations, architecture is far from being a source of inspiration to me. What really challenges me is the endless complexity of the primordial and yet ever-present (eternal?) human act of constructing. Architecture comes much after this founding gesture of humanity.

**Virginia Tieri**

What is the importance in your work of the natural sunlight that enters the museum gallery and the artificial neon lightning of your sculpture?

**Pedro Cabrita Reis**

Neon lightning in my works should be looked upon as any other material like steel, bricks, wood, or glass. A neon tube even when switched on does not provide "illumination." It is a single and humble device that generates light, which has to be considered as another component with its own texture, density and that, like others, occupies a particular space with certain intensity.

**Virginia Tieri**

Do the materials you use help shape your thoughts or so they extract from the materials what is hidden within them?

**Pedro Cabrita Reis**

It works both ways as well as in many other different ways. And there are no methods, no beginnings. Nothing is forbidden, nothing has to be left behind, no limits, nothing should be rejected or forgotten. Every little thing matters. And of course, there are no ends either.

**Virginia Tieri**

Art is an end in itself, while architecture cannot and must not be so. Yet the best best-known architectural monuments in the world are the Altar of the Nation in Rome, the Eiffel Tower in Paris and the Egyptian Pyramids, where the function is purely symbolic – they have no practical purpose – so in the end architecture here is reduced to the aesthetic criteria of sculpture, responding to a purely sensorial perception. Could your work be referred to as architecture?

**Pedro Cabrita Reis**

Again, I don't think so. My work is referred to things I've already forgotten and certainly even more to others I haven't found yet. My work is about absence and oblivion but also about a possible humanity. It's about having learnt how to dry mud, to make a brick and knowing that infinity is the inability to reach the horizon. My work is what Art is about.

**Virginia Tieri**

The static qualities of a building are based on a constructive principle that requires a pilaster to have a great section at the base and to taper as it grows in height. Your work seems to overthrow this concept. Why is the pilaster bigger on the upper floor than on the lower?

**Pedro Cabrita Reis**

Why? Because of that eternal love for the beauty implied on chaos, in disorder, because of the hypnotic attraction for instability, for that attraction, impossible to deny, towards vertigo, because of the compulsion for what is bound to us through fear, for all that, because of all that will still do art, believing that we somehow find harmony down the road and perhaps "redeem" our existence seemingly useless. In the end, we still decide to reverse the alleged logics of pilaster...

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